

Message Text

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ORIGIN OES-05

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DRAFTED BY OES/ENP/PO:CRNELSON

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NEA/AFN: WSWIESLOGEL (IN DRAFT)

NEA/AFN: MR. MURRAY (IN DRAFT)

OES/C: MHASELTON

AID/PHA/POP:RRAVENHOLT (SUBS)

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY

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FOR AMBASSADOR GREEN, COORDINATOR OF POPULATION AFFAIRS

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: SPOP, TU

SUBJECT: BEHAVIOR OF IRA LUBELL AT THE THIRD INTERNATIONAL
CONFERENCE ON STERILIZATION, TUNIS FEBRUARY 1-4, 1976.

REF: TUNIS 1100

1. AMBASSADOR SEELYE HAS JUST INFORMED DEPARTMENT OF
DEPLORABLE BEHAVIOR OF AVS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR IRA LUBELL
TOWARDS TUNISIAN PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA DURING RECENT TUNIS
CONFERENCE ON VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION (REFTEL REPEATED
TO YOU SEPARATELY). HE REPORTS LUBELL REFUSED BOURGUIBA
INVITATION TO CONFERENCE PARTICIPANTS TO CALL ON THE
PRESIDENT BECAUSE IT WOULD BE A "POLITICAL ACT" AND AVS
WAS "STRICTLY NON-POLITICAL."

2. DR. RAVENHOLT TELLS US HE HAD AGREED LATE FORENOON

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FEBRUARY 5 TO HEAD GROUP OF REMAINING DELEGATES TO MEET

WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA AT 10 A.M- FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6.
LATER THAT AFTERNOON UPON RETURNING TO HOTEL HILTON HE
WAS INFORMED THAT BOURGUIBA HAD CANCELLED THE PROPOSED
MEETING. HOWEVER, RAVENHOLT WAS INFORMED THURSDAY
EVENING THAT PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA HAD EARLIER, PERHAPS
TUESDAY, ASKED TUNISIAN FAMILY PLANNING DIRECTOR SHEKIR
TO ARRANGE OPPORTUNITY FOR HIM (BOURGUIBA) TO ADDRESS THE

AVS CONFERENCE. BUT WHEN SHEKIR TRIED TO ARRANGE THIS,
HE HAD BEEN TOLD BY LUBELL THAT THIS WOULD BE
INAPPROPRIATE SINCE IT WAS A "TECHNICAL" AND NOT A
"POLITICAL"CONFERENCE. RAVENHOLT, WHO CHARACTERIZED
LUBELL'S DECISION AS "UNFORTUNATE," WAS NOT CONSULTED
BY LUBELL ON THE MATTER. NEITHER DID LUBELL CONSULT
WITH AMBASSADOR SEELYE, NOR INFORM HIM OF HIS ACTIONS.

3. AMBASSADOR SEELYE IS INCENSED OVER THE INCIDENT AND
HAS ASKED DEPARTMENT TO SUGGEST THAT LUBELL WRITE A
LETTER TO BOURGUIBA TO APOLOGIZE. UNFORTUNATELY, LUBELL
IS OUT OF THE COUNTRY AT THE MOMENT. ON HIS RETURN, WE
WILL GET IN TOUCH WITH HIM, BUT SINCE WE ARE NOT SURE
HE WILL MAKE THE SORT OF APOLOGY WE BELIEVE APPROPRIATE
AND REQUIRED WE PROPOSE YOU MAKE THE FIRST GESTURE TO
RESOLVE THIS LAMENTABLE AFFAIR BY SENDING A PERSONAL
MESSAGE TO BOURGUIBA THROUGH AMBASSADOR SEELYE. SUGGESTED
TEXT, CLEARED BY NEA, OES AND AID IS AS FOLLOWS: QUOTE:

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I HAVE ONLY NOW LEARNED FROM AMBASSADOR SEELYE OF THE
DEPLORABLE AND DISCOURTEOUS BEHAVIOR WHICH WAS SHOWN TO
YOU BY DR. IRA LUBELL, THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE
ASSOCIATION FOR VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION, WHO WAS
ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN PREPARATIONS FOR THE THIRD INTER-
NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION WHICH WAS
HELD IN TUNIS IN EARLY FEBRUARY. THIS CONFERENCE WAS
PRIVATELY ORGANIZED AND CONDUCTED, BUT IT DID ENJOY THE
ACTIVE SUPPORT OF MY GOVERNMENT BECAUSE OF CONTINUING
U.S. INTEREST IN VOLUNTARY STERILIZATION AS AN ALTER-
NATIVE METHOD OF FAMILY PLANNING.

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IN VIEW OF THIS INTEREST AND ASSOCIATION ON THE PART OF
THE U.S. GOVERNMENT, I WAS DOUBLY DISTRESSED THAT
DR. LUBELL, IN HIS PRIVATE CAPACITY AS AVS EXECUTIVE
DIRECTOR AT THIS CONFERENCE, SHOULD HAVE BEEN SO
INSENSITIVE IN HIS DEALINGS WITH YOUR OFFICE.

THE U.S. GOVERNMENT HAS LONG ADMIRERD YOUR COURAGEOUS

AND PROGRESSIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE SEARCH FOR WAYS TO DEAL WITH THE WORLD'S POPULATION CRISIS, AND IT WAS PARTICULARLY INAPPROPRIATE THAT DR. LUBELL SHOULD HAVE FAILED SO GRIEVOUSLY IN RESPONDING TO THE HOSPITALITY WHICH YOU AND THE TUNISIAN PEOPLE EXTENDED. HIS ACTIONS IN NO WAY REFLECT THE VIEWS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, OR OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

MAY I SEND MY PERSONAL AS WELL AS OFFICIAL APOLOGY FOR THIS MOST UNFORTUNATE INCIDENT. I WILL NOT RETURN TO WASHINGTON UNTIL THE END OF FEBRUARY, AND BECAUSE OF THE URGENCY AND IMPORTANCE WHICH I GIVE TO THIS MATTER, I AM SENDING YOU THIS MESSAGE BY CABLE FROM ISLAMABAD. AMBASSADOR SEELYE SHARES WITH ME THIS SENSE OF DEEP REGRET, AND I AM ASKING HIM PERSONALLY TO DELIVER MY LETTER TO YOUR OFFICE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE.

SINCERELY,

AMBASSADOR MARSHALL GREEN
U.S. COORDINATOR OF
POPULATION AFFAIRS

END QUOTE.

4. AN ALTERNATIVE COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO WAIT FOR YOUR RETURN AND SEND A SIGNED LETTER THROUGH THE POUCH. WE BELIEVE THE RESULTING SIX WEEKS DELAY IN COMMUNICATING WITH PRESIDENT BOURGUIBA WOULD ONLY ADD INSULT TO INJURY. INGERSOLL

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